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ABSTRACT

The goal of the Pre Teacher Assessment Center is to give college sophomores a diagnostic assessment of their potential teaching skills across 13 skill dimensions felt to be prerequisites for teaching. The pre teacher assessment provides students with detailed information about potential teaching strengths and weaknesses and helps remediate deficiencies before college graduation. The center uses four simulation activities that can be administered to 12 to 60 participants during a one-and-a-half-day period. During the actual assessment, trained assessors observe students, score responses, and rate overall performance. At the conclusion, students are given a report of their score for each teaching skill. Skills assessed include problem analysis, strategic decision-making, tactical decision-making, written communication, leadership, stress tolerance, planning and organizing, oral communication, oral presentation, sensitivity, innovativeness, initiative, and monitoring. Following assessment, students are given the opportunity to use followup training modules to remediate weaknesses. Three modules addressing the dimensions of leadership, innovativeness, and sensitivity are currently available. (MSE)

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PRE TEACHER ASSESSMENT PROJECT

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the Pre Teacher Assessment Center is to give college sophomores a diagnostic assessment of their potential teaching skills across thirteen skill dimensions that we feel are prerequisites for teaching. The pre teacher assessment provides college sophomores with detailed information regarding their potential teaching strengths and weaknesses and thus helps to remediate teaching deficiencies prior to college graduation.

The pre teacher assessment center uses four simulated activities that can be administered to twelve-to-sixty participants during a one-and-a-half day period. During an actual assessment, trained assessors observe students, score responses, and rate their overall performance across thirteen skill dimensions. At the conclusion of the assessment center, participants are given a report that presents their scoring for each skill assessed at the center. Assessed skills include: problem analysis, strategic decision making, tactical decision making, written communication, leadership, stress tolerance, planning and organizing, oral communication, oral presentation, sensitivity, innovativeness, initiative, and monitoring.

Following the assessment activities, participants are given the opportunity to take part in follow-up training modules designed by IUP to remediate assessed weaknesses. Currently, three modules are completed that address the dimensions of leadership, innovativeness, and sensitivity.

Introduction

The origins of the assessment center method can be traced to the famous Harvard psychologist, Dr. Henry Murray, who began studying ways to assess

human personality in the late 1930's. During World War II, he was recruited by General William Donovan of the OSS to design a method for finding candidates for intelligence work (Murray, 1948). Thus began a process that later evolved into AT&T's assessment centers of the early 1950's. Douglas Bray perfected the assessment center method for AT&T and recently published a thirty-year validation describing the success of the process (Bray & Howard, 1989). The assessment center method has been used by most of the Fortune 500 companies for the past thirty years as a way of selecting candidates for managerial positions. In the late 1970's, Paul Hersey, of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, developed and implemented a Principal Assessment Center designed to assess potential candidates for both elementary and secondary administrative positions.

In the fall of 1987, Indiana University of Pennsylvania conducted the nation's first pre teacher assessment center. Within a month, Slippery Rock University and Millersville University implemented pre teacher assessment centers on their respective campuses. For the past two years, we have trained over seventy assessors and have assessed over one hundred education majors. In addition, Development Dimensions International, the nation's leading assessment company, worked with us for the past four years in developing the simulations and validating the overall assessment process.

Background

Students need to know early in their college career what there overall teaching strengths and weaknesses are. If assessed early enough, these students can improve their teaching techniques or decide to pursue another

career. Students need an early prescriptive assessment of teaching strengths and weaknesses rather than a competency test that occurs at the end of formal training.

In response to this need, Indiana, Millersville, and Slippery Rock Universities, in conjunction with Development Dimensions International, developed a set of assessment exercises that are designed to measure a college sophomore's basic teaching strengths and weaknesses. In developing the simulations, we set forth a number of criteria to be met. They included: (1) develop a set of simulations that assess each of the thirteen identified dimensions, (2) develop simulations that take into account the limited teaching skills of college sophomores, (3) develop simulations to measure several dimensions, (4) develop simulations that can be administered to at least 24 participants rather than the traditional assessment centers that assess twelve or fewer candidates at a time, (5) develop a plan to measure any given dimension by two or more simulations, (6) develop simulations that can diagnose potential teaching strengths and weaknesses, (7) develop simulations that can be scored without the need for extensive consensus discussions among assessors, and (8) develop an assessment center that can be administered within a sophomore's weekly academic schedule.

Description

The assessment center's simulations reflect two different evaluative approaches for assessing a student's potential teaching strengths. The first approach is classroom-oriented, presenting students with classroom situations familiar to sophomore education majors. The second evaluative approach is not

strictly classroom-oriented; it presents situations designed to elicit behaviors necessary both in and out of the classroom to produce effective teachers. These simulations focus on such behavior dimensions as initiative, innovativeness, decision making, leadership, sensitivity, problem analysis, and communication skills. A brief description of each simulation follows.

The School Museum Simulation: The participant is confronted with a series of problems regarding a school district's future funding of their school museum. Each participant is given a packet of material that presents issues that need to be addressed, decisions that need to be made, and data that needs to be analyzed. This exercise measures the participant's ability to analyze problems, to make decisions, to be innovative, to take initiative, to tolerate stress, and to communicate orally and in writing.

Classroom Vignettes: The participant views a series of short classroom episodes on a VHS monitor. As participants monitor the classroom vignettes of both teachers and students they must react, in writing, to a set of questions following each episode. The video exercises measures monitoring, tactical decision making, sensitivity, written communication, and problem analysis.

Actual Teaching: This simulation requires participants to present a 15-minute lesson to an assessor who is role playing a student teaching supervisor. Each simulation packet contains a lesson plan, visual aids, handouts, and background material. This simulation assesses oral presentation, oral communication, planning and organizing, and leadership.

Educational Fair: This in-basket simulation presents the participant with a series of situations regarding the school district's educational fair.

Within the two-hour time frame, a participant must analyze information, make decisions, develop a plan, and communicate his/her plan in writing. This simulation is designed to measure initiative, innovativeness, strategic decision making, leadership, planning and organizing, sensitivity, written communication, and innovativeness.

Final Report and Follow Up Activities: Each assessed student receives a report of his/her overall strengths and weaknesses across the thirteen assessed dimensions. Since pre teacher assessment is designed as a diagnostic experience, remedial or developmental training modules are being developed to help students upgrade specific basic skills. The follow-up training modules, three of which are completed, address specific dimensions being assessed in the pre teacher assessment center. Each training module has four distinct components. These are: (1) a set of beliefs, (2) a brief theory related to the dimension, (3) a short VHS tape modeling a classroom situation, and (4) a series of practice exercises.

The pre teacher assessment center can fit into any existing teacher education program. Currently, three universities have implemented an assessor training program as well as actual assessment of college sophomores. Several universities have expressed an interest in using the simulations with juniors and seniors. The assessment center is considered as a supplement to existing teacher education programs. The actual assessment is not part of a curriculum nor is it considered instructional, although the results of the assessment are quite informative.

A typical pre teacher assessment center needs a director, a pool of twenty assessors, and several classrooms in which to administer the simulations. A director will need to go through an assessor training workshop and to take part in several assessments in order to feel comfortable with the process. We require newly formed assessment centers to have a veteran assessor when they implement their first actual assessment of students.

We require a one-time three thousand dollar buy-in fee. This money is used to continue basic research on the assessment process. Assessor training costs are currently $250.00 per individual plus expenses. Training is always under the supervision of IUP. We include this stipulation for one reason: we want to insure consistency among all the assessment centers. Centers also need basic supplies such as paper, pens, pencils, and secretarial support. The only equipment needed is a VHS recorder and television monitor. Cost per student for the four simulations will be $50.00 to $100.00.

Results

Several reliability and validity analyses are ongoing. A brief description of the projects follows.

Parallel assessments of a sample of students: In this study, more than one assessor is assigned to observe and rate each participant. Measures of rater agreement are computed to measure agreement on skill dimensions ratings in each exercise and to identify sources of error bias in assessor rating. Rater reliability ranges from -.10 to .89. This data enables us to "key in" on assessors who need additional training in scoring one or more simulations.

Assessment of standard stimulus materials: All assessors are asked to score a series of "model" participants at the conclusion of assessor training. The "model" materials represent actual student performance that has been videotaped along with copies of the participant's written responses. Assessor observations and ratings are then compared against a "key" which shows their ability to evaluate each exercise in a consistent and accurate manner. This procedure is used to verity the effectiveness of assessor training, identify weaknesses of individual assessors, calibrate the assessment process across universities, and demonstrate consistency of evaluation over time.

Relationships of assessment results to archival data: This analysis demonstrates the degree to which assessment ratings are independent of other more traditional predictors of academic or career success, such as past grades or SAT scores. It may also demonstrate the degree to which assessment results predict outcomes such as grades in subsequent activities such as student teaching.

Relationships of assessment results to behavioral measures of teacher performance: This set of analyses will demonstrate the degree to which the assessment ratings are predictive of actual teaching behaviors. These behaviors will be organized around the dimensions of teaching effectiveness, and can potentially be measured in training/classroom situations, or following employment in teaching positions. Correlation and regression analysis will be used to demonstrate the degree to which overall dimensional assessment ratings predict the training or job performance measures. This will provide the strongest evidence of empirical validity of the assessment program.

Collection of data will be ongoing during and beyond the student's university career. Annual updating of these validity analyses will be performed. Separate year-by-year validity indices will be produced to evaluate any trends in validity of assessment results.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Pre teacher assessment has the potential for helping to improve a student's ability to teach. The pre teacher assessment model includes a number of issues that must be addressed before long-range success can be insured.

1. Pre teacher assessment must be consistent from college to college. Therefore, standards for training and assessment administration must be established and maintained.
2. Parallel simulations must be developed and piloted on a regular basis.
3. Follow-up training modules must be developed to provide remedial help to students who need help in one or more of the assessed dimensions
4. Assessment centers must be staffed on each campus. Assessment directors should be assigned to the center at least 1/2 time. Provisions must be made to provide faculty support for conducting assessments as well as secretarial support for typing reports and scheduling centers.

In addition to the continued use of the pre teacher assessment center with college sophomores, we are currently piloting the assessment center as an induction model with first year teachers.